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A N
E S S A Y
O N
HUMAN LIFE.

*—Sapientia prima est
Stultitia caruisse.....*



L O N D O N,

Printed, and are to be sold by FLETCHER GYLES over
against Grays Inn in Holborn.
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A N
E S S A Y
O N
HUMAN LIFE.

PLeasure but cheats us with an empty Name,
Still seems to vary, yet is still the same;
Amusement's all its utmost Skill can boast,
By Use it lessens, and in Thought is lost:
The Youth that riots and the Age that hoards,
Folly that sacrifices Things to Words;
Pride, Wit, and Beauty in one Taste agree,
'Tis sensual, or 'tis mental Luxury.

Sad State of Nature, doom'd to fruitless Pain,
 Something to wish and want, but never gain :
 Restless we live, and disappointed die,
 Unhappy, tho' we know not how nor why.

Reason, perhaps may lend her gen'rous Aid;
 Reason, which never yet her Trust betray'd :
 Let her direct us in the doubtful Strife,
 Let her conduct us thro' the Maze of Life.

Is human Reason then from Weakness free ?
 Partakes she not of our Infirmary ?

Can she apply with never-failing Art,
 The healing Balsam to the wounded Part ?
 Correct those Errors, which the Passions cause,
 And teach the Will to follow Wisdom's Laws ?
 Alas! Experience but too plainly shews

'That Man can act against the Truths he knows :
 By Customs led, or by Allurements won,
 Discern that Evil, which he cannot shun.

Whate'er we do, the Motive's much the same,
 'Tis Impulse governs, under Reason's Name ;

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Each eagerly some fav'rite End pursues,
And diff'rent Tempers furnish diff'rent Views.

Is it for Fear of Wrong, or Love of Right,
That Statesmen labour, or that Warriors fight?
T' enrich his Country, does the Sailor brave
The cruel Pirate, and the threat'ning Wave?
In Search of Truth, unwearied Sages try,
By certain Rules, to fix Uncertainty?
No! 'tis Desire and Hope that drive 'em on:
Thus greatest Things for meanest Ends are done.

Self-Love, howe'er disguis'd, misunderstood,
Howe'er misplac'd, is still the sov'reign Good:
Virtue or Wisdom but the vain Pretence,
These may direct, but Passions influence.
Presumptuous Man! why boasts thou thy Freewill,
By Constitution doom'd to Good or Ill?
What feeble Checks are all those studied Rules,
Unpractis'd Lessons of the useless Schools?
Say, can thy Art oppos'd to Nature's Force
Obstruct her Motions, or suspend her Course?

Go, change in *Africa* their sable Hue,
 Or make our *Europe* bring her Negroes too;
 Roll back the Tides, forbid the Streams to flow,
 Nor let this Earth returning Seasons know.
 Slave to thy self, whilst Lord of all beside,
 Surmount thy Weakness, or renounce thy Pride.

That moving Pow'r which first produc'd the Whole,
 To every Thing has fix'd a certain Goal:
 Thither all tend, and must their Circles run,
 For such the Order when the Whole begun.
 To diff'rent Creatures, diff'rent Ranks assign'd,
 Man claims the first, as of a nobler Kind:
 How just that Claim, what Wisdom must decide?
 Reason is his alone, by which 'tis try'd:
 Inferior Creatures silently submit,
 'Tis his to talk, and therefore to have Wit.
 Thus haughty *Greece* despis'd the World around,
 And barb'rous, all she understood not, found.

Look o'er the wide Creation, see how all
 Its several Parts obey the Maker's Call:

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The Earth how fertile, and how rich the Sea,
 In various Salts, for Nature's Chimistry;
 How Air digests, what burning Suns exhale,
 And Dews, and Snows, and Rains, by Turns prevail.
 Beasts, Birds, and Reptiles, see 'em all conspire,
 To act whate'er their sev'ral States require.

But wiser Man disdains this meaner Part,
 Nature with him must still give Way to Art;
 Vain of Conceit, he boasts his fancy'd Skill,
 And, arbitrary, rules the World at Will:
 Now fierce and cruel, then as mild and kind,
 Each Action owing to each Turn of Mind;
 One Day a Friend, the next as great a Foe,
 As Humour, Caprice, Pique, or Int'rests go;
 Wisdom and Folly thus by Turns preside,
 And Chance alone inclines to either Side.

Ask the bold Freeman, or the coward Slave,
 What makes one abject, and the other brave?
 What gives to Fools their Faith, to Knaves their Wiles.
 To Cynicks Sow'rness, and to Flatt'ers Smiles?

This

This one great Truth must stand by all confest,
 Some ruling Passion lurks in ev'ry Breast;
 That Weakness by a specious Name they call,
 But 'tis that Weakness still which governs all.

Wisely the Springs of Action we conceal,
 Thus Sordidness is Prudence, Fury, Zeal;
 Ambition makes the Publick Good her Care,
 And Hypocrites, the Mask of Saintship wear.

Inur'd to Falshood, we ourselves deceive,
 Oft what we wish, we fancy, we believe;
 We call that Judgment which is only Will,
 And as we act, we learn to argue ill;
 Like Bigots, who their various Creeds defend
 By making Reason still to System bend.

Customs or Int'rests govern all Mankind,
 Some Biass cleaves to the unguarded Mind;
 Thro' this, as in a false or flatt'ring Glafs
 Things seem to change their Natures as they pass.
 Objects the same in diff'rent Lights appear,
 And but the Colours which we give 'em wear.

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Error and Fraud from this great Source arise,
 All Fools are modish, and all Knaves are wise.
 Who does not boast some Merit of his own?
 Tho' to himself perhaps 'tis only known.
 Each suits Rewards to his own fav'rite Vice,
 Pride has its Crowns, and Lust its Paradise:
 Bonze, Priest and Dervise, all in this agree,
 That Heav'n must be Pomp or Luxury;
 Man, Slave to Sense, no higher Bliss can know,
 Still measures Things above by Things below.
 Joys much the same, but differ in Degree,
 As Time enlarg'd becomes Eternity.

How vain is all that Science we pursue!
 Scorn'd by the many, useless to the few:
 Since short of Truth our utmost Labours end,
 Who knows but Ign'rance is our greatest Friend?
 The fruitless Pains but shew the Weakness more,
 And we, like Misers, 'midst our Wealth are poor.
 Much hoarded Learning but like Lumber lies,
 Or ends in Guess-Work and Obscurities.

What tho' proud *Greece* her seven *Sages* boast?
 The Names alone remain, the Race is lost.
Satyrs, and *Centaur*s too, might live of old,
 (For so we are in ancient Story told)
 But shou'd we doubt in this our faithless Age;
 Who can produce a *Centaur* or a *Sage*?
 Such mighty Births were Nature's first Effays,
 The lusty Offspring of her youthful Days;
 Our later Times can no such Wonders shew,
 But what were *Giants* then are *Pigmies* now,
 Of all the painful Follies of Mankind,
 Still to be seeking what they ne'er must find,
 Is sure the greatest, not unlike the Toil
 Of him who labours in a barren Soil,
 Beyond our State if our fond Wishes tend,
 Means must be vain where we mistake the End.
 Pride whispers mighty Projects in the Ear,
 Bids us be great, be wise, be happy here;
 But sad Experience shews the Laws of Fate,
 And teaches us to know ourselves too late.

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Errour is a Distemper of the Mind,
 Hard to be cur'd, because 'tis hard to find ;
 So mixt and blended with our very Frame,
 It lurks secure, and borrows Reason's Name.
 In diff'rent Persons diff'rent Ways it springs,
 'Tis Factiousness in Subjects, Pride in Kings ;
 Boundless alike, they in Extremes agree,
 These in Oppression, those in Anarchy ;
 Both aim at what 'twere Ruin to obtain,
 A civil Frenzy or a Tyrant Reign.

The Wise must into Nature's Secrets pry,
 The Weak believe they know not what nor why ;
 And we may equally deluded call,
 Who doubt of nothing as who doubt of all.
 Profane or pious, Bigotry's the same,
 The Motives Terror, Avarice, or Fame.
 Opinion is but Int'rest in Disguise,
 And Right and Wrong in Strength of Parties lies.

Some wou'd be happy, know nor Want nor Care,
 Others still find more Evils than there are ;

Whilst Truth, unheeded in the Midway lies,
And all Extremes are like Absurdities.

Wrong Turns of Head are Nature's greatest Curse,
Improving ev'ry Day, from bad to worse.
In some odd Light all Objects still they view,
Thus true with them is false, and false is true.
In Trifles solemn, diligent and wise,
Important Things as Trifles they despise;
Caressing Enemies, their Friends they shun,
And doat on Knaves by whom they are undone.
Deaf to Advice, or taking Wrong for Right,
They boldly blunder on in Reason's Spite;
And under clearer Light's obscure Pretence
Are the Antipodes of common Sense.

Wou'd you persuade a Wretch intent on Pelf,
Tho' he starves others, not to starve himself;
To fence at least his sapless Trunk from cold,
Nor seem as fond of Tatters as of Gold;
No! he's too cunning for your sly Design,
You'd have him like yourself, be poor and fine;

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But he in Spite of Envy richer grows,
And scorns the Luxury of Meat and Cloaths.

Ask the ambitious why he wastes his Life
In needless Struggles and uncertain Strife?
Why not in Peace enjoy what Plenty gives?
So the obscure, the weak, the lazy lives;
Exalted Spirits have a nobler Aim,
And know no Happiness but Toil and Fame.

Well! must it suit a selfish hollow Heart,
To act the honest Patriot's gen'rous Part;
No Tool of Party, nor no Slave of State,
No mean Dependant on the guilty Great;
Boldly he pleads for Liberty and Laws,
Content to perish in his Country's Cause;
When lo! a Ray Divine of Favour gleams,
Quite diff'rent Topicks then become his Themes,
Old Friends, old Notions are at once forgot,
And Shame and Wages are the Hireling's Lot.

The little Mind whose Joy in Mischief lies,
Hates all Mankind, but most the Good, and Wise;

Proud

Proud of his Shame, he boasts his spiteful Skill,
And places all his Worth in doing ill.

But baseborn Fear oft checks what Rage devis'd,
And leaves him disappointed and despis'd.

Endless the Task to point the various Ways,
How each Wrong-head its diff'rent Gifts displays;
How Poverty in Boasts its Wants wou'd hide,
And Meanness shews itself in awkward Pride;
How Knaves are cunning at their own Expence,
And Coxcombs fancy Forwardness is Sense.
Vain is th' Attempt to be what Heav'n denies,
As vain the Art that Weakness to disguise.
Prudence alone can teach the useful Skill,
T'improve the Good and to correct the Ill.
True Wisdom lies in Practice more than Rules,
For what are Maxims when applied to Fools?
Of Wit and Folly reason all you can,
Who acts most wisely is the wisest Man.
Each State of Life has its peculiar View,
Alike in each, there is a false and true:

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This Point to fix is Reason's Use and End,
 On this Success all other must depend ;
 But in this Point no Error can be small,
 To deviate e'er so little, ruins all.
 The Mark once mis'd, however near you aim,
 Mis'd by an Inch or Furlong, 'tis the same :
 Who sets out wrong is more than half undone,
 Error has many Ways, and Truth but one.

Wrong Estimates wrong Conduct must produce,
 They lose the Blessing that mistake its Use :
 Who value Wealth or Pow'r but more or less,
 As that can riot, or as this oppress ;
 What say they else but that they both are given
 To execute the Wrath of angry Heaven.

Fools ever vain, at some Distinction aim,
 And fancy Madness is the Way to Fame :
 No Matter how the deathless Name's acquir'd,
 By Countries ravag'd, or a * Temple fir'd :

* *Erostratus*, a very obscure Man, set Fire to the Temple of *Diana* at *Ephesus* in Order to immortalize his Name, and has succeeded in it, in spite of all Endeavours to the contrary.

Alike transmitted down to latest Times,
 A *Trajan's* Virtues, and a *Nero's* Crimes.
 Means are indiff'rent to the End's obtain'd,
 † *Richard* was guilty, but what then? he reign'd.
 Wou'd you be Good and Great, the Hope is vain,
 The Bus'ness is not to deserve, but gain :
 Fortune is fickle, and but short her Stay,
 He comes too late that takes the farthest Way.

Is this, Oh Grandeur! then thy envy'd State,
 To raise Mens Wonder and provoke their Hate?
 By Crimes procur'd, and then in fear enjoy'd,
 By Mobbs applauded, and by Mobbs destroy'd.
 Say, mighty Cunning! which deserve the Prize,
 The Courtier's Promises, or Trader's Lies?
 Some short liv'd Profit, all the Pains Rewards
 Of Bankrupt Dealers, and of perjurd Lords.

Honest alike, you own, but wiser far,
 The Knave upon the Bench than at the Bar :

† *Richard* the Usurper.

Where lies the Diff'rence? only in Degree,
And higher Rank is greater Infamy.

Poor Rogues in Chains but dangle to the Wind,
Whilst rich ones live the Terror of Mankind.

Pomp, Pow'r and Riches, all mere Trifles are
When purchas'd by the Loss of Character :
Chance may the Wise betray, the Brave defeat,
But they correct, or are above their Fate.
Credit once lost can never be retriev'd,
How few will trust the Man who once deceiv'd ?
Craft, like the Mole, works only under Ground,
Is lost in Daylight, and destroy'd when found.

Notions mistaken, Reas'nings ill apply'd,
And Sophisms that conclude on either Side ;
Alike th' Unwary, and the weak, mislead,
Who judge of Men and Things, as each succeed.
Did * Rivals fall by *Borgia's* vile Deceit,
A *Matchiavel* will call a *Borgia* great ;
The lucky Cheat proclaims the Villain wise,
And Fraud and Murther are but Policies.

* The *Vitelli* and *Orsini* basely betray'd and murder'd by Order of the Duke of *Valentinois*.

'The same Despair which made good *Cato* die,
 To *Cæsar* gave his last great * Victory.
 Had Right decided, and not Fate the Cause,
Rome had preserv'd her *Cato*, and her Laws.
 Fortune sets off the Bad, as tawdry Dress
 Shews but the more the Wearer's Homeliness.
 So mad *Caligula's* † vain Triumph tells,
 That all his Conquests are but Cockle Shells.
 True Merit shines in native Splendor bright,
 Whilst false but glares awhile, and hurts the Sight :
 As Midnight Vapours cast a glimm'ring Blaze,
 And to the Darkness owe their feeble Rays.

The wise * *Egyptians* when their Monarch dy'd,
 By Truth's sure Standard all his Actions try'd.
 When no false Lustre, Wealth or Pow'r appears
 To bias Judgment by its Hopes or Fears ;
 Then conq'ring Chiefs profuse of Subjects Blood,
 And lazy Dotards, indolently good ;
 That trust their People to a Fav'rite's Care,
 Whose peaceful Rapines cost 'em more than War,

* The Battle of *Munda* against *Pompey's* Son.

† *Caligula* drew up his Army in Battle Array on the Coast, and then order'd them to gather Shells, for which great Exploit, he returned to *Rome* in Triumph. See *Suetonius*.

* See *Diodorus Siculus* in the First Book.

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By injur'd Thousands Wrongs are doom'd to be
Perpetual Marks of Scorn and Infamy.

Fortune with Fools, and Wit with Knaves you find,
'Tis social Virtue shews the noble Mind.

Above low Wisdom Cunning's mean Pretence,
There is no counterfeiting Excellence :

The artful Head may act the honest Part,
But all true Honour rises from the Heart.

Which serv'd his Country best, let Story shew,
A guilty *Clodius*, or good *Cicero* ?

Faults are in all ; but here the difference lies,
Clodius had Vices, *Tully* Vanities.

Who loves Mankind by Social Duty taught,
Will never think their Good too dearly bought.

What tho' he sacrifice the vain Desire
Of some gay Bawbles, which the World admire ?

Despising Riches and abhorring Pow'r
When blasted with the Name of Plunderer.

Still he may taste Life's greatest Good, Content.
For who so happy as the Innocent ?

Jugurtha * murder'd, brib'd and fought his Way,
From Subject Station to Imperial Sway ;

* King of *Numidia*, famous for his Wars with the *Romans*, remarkable for his Bravery and his Crimes.

But insecure 'midst all his guilty State,
 'The Man was wretched, tho' the Monarch great;
 Like *Cromwell* daring in the doubtful Fight,
 But † pale and trembling in the Dead of Night.

Passion is lawless, headstrong Youth is mad,
 But Nature varies not in Good and Bad.
 From the same Causes same Effects must flow,
 Truth is but what it was an Age ago:
 Modes may be chang'd, but Truths are stubborn Things,
 They court not Fav'rites, nor will flatter Kings.

Rome had her *Cæsar*, and our *Cromwell*, we,
 Alike in Fortune, Pow'r, and Infamy;
 And shou'd new *Cæsars* and new *Cromwells* rise,
 They cou'd but act the same dull Tragedies:
 Foes to Mankind, themselves, and Virtue's Rules,
 Whilst living Heroes, and when dead but Fools.

† Sall. Bell. Jugur. *Neque post id locorum Jugurtha dies aut nox ulla
 quæta fuit: Neque loco, neque mortali cuiquam aut tempori satis crede-
 re: — Alio atque alio loco sapè contra decus regium noctu requiescere —*

Clarendon Hist. Rebell. Of *Cromwell* he says, he was not easy of Ac-
 cess, nor so much seen abroad, and seem'd to be in some Disorder when
 his Eyes found any Stranger in the Room, &c. rarely lodg'd Two Nights
 in one Chamber, &c.

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